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Attorney addresses growing concerns over attorney fees in Flint water settlement

While waiting on a judge to rule on amount for attorney fees, there's a growing call for greater transparency during the process



By [Michael Nafso](#)

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FLINT, Mich. (WJRT) - (03/24/2021) - More than 33,000 people have signed on to participate in the \$641 million Flint water settlement.

The deadline to sign up is Monday, but there is concern about attorney fees, which could total more than \$200 million of that money.

While waiting on a judge to rule on that amount, there's a growing call for greater transparency on this process.

During Monday's Special Affairs Committee meeting, Flint City Council joined Mayor Sheldon Neeley, demanding transparency through every step of the settlement process.

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"The Flint community has suffered enough and deserves transparency to ensure these dollars are given to Flint families and children as intended," Neeley said.

"This would be a thorough review and opportunity for residents to see documentation of fees and expenses on their behalf," he added.

Neeley wants to know how the attorneys would be entitled to making a third of the overall proposed settlement and find out exactly where all that money will be distributed, but it's not just city officials who are concerned.

"We all know and work with folks whose children have been severely affected by the Flint water crisis, and we really think that what is fair is for the vast majority of those dollars to go to the kids who've been affected instead of going into the pockets of attorneys," State Representative, John Cherry said.

Cherry and other Flint area members of the Michigan House are urging Judge Levy to limit attorney fees to ten percent of the settlement instead of more than thirty percent, and they adopted that resolution formally on Wednesday.

Even though they can't legally lower the fee, they're making sure the court understands their opinion, but attorneys involved in the case disagree.

"We've been litigating aggressively to the tune of about maybe 80,000 or 90,000 hours of lawyer work time and about 10 or so million in costs," Attorney Hunter Shkolnik said.

Shkolnik is the co-lead counsel for the individual plaintiffs. He says a six-percent fee is normal for lead counsel, making up up roughly \$50 million of that \$200 million.

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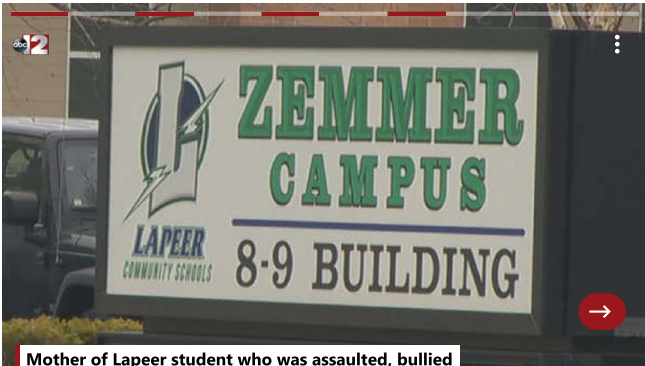
The remaining \$150 million or so would go to lawyers with individual retainer agreements, paying their lawyer 27 percent instead of a third that's allowed under the State Bar of Michigan. Shkolnik says they negotiated to bring that number down to keep the attorney fees in the overall settlement down.

As for transparency, he says there's a special master assigned to monitor the hours for the lawyers every month and encourages the public to follow the proceedings which are open to them,

"If they heard the caring and the attention of the judge and the special master, they would understand that no one is doing something behind their back or inappropriate," Shkolnik said.

To visit the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan and locate upcoming hearings, click [here](#).

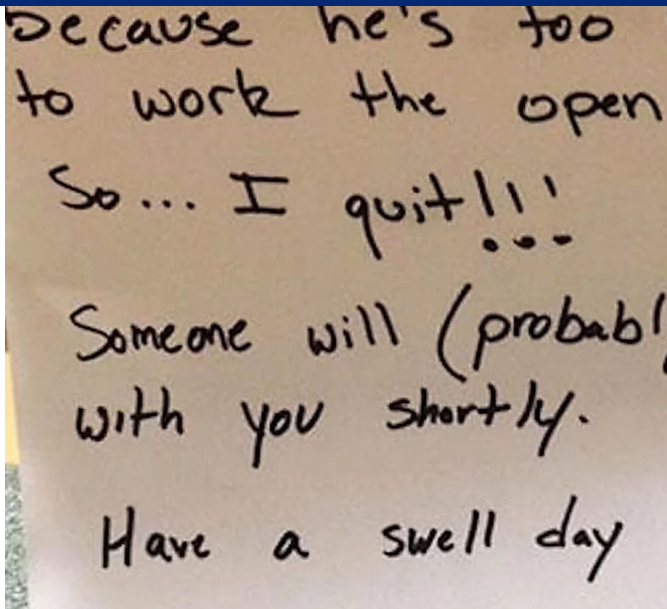
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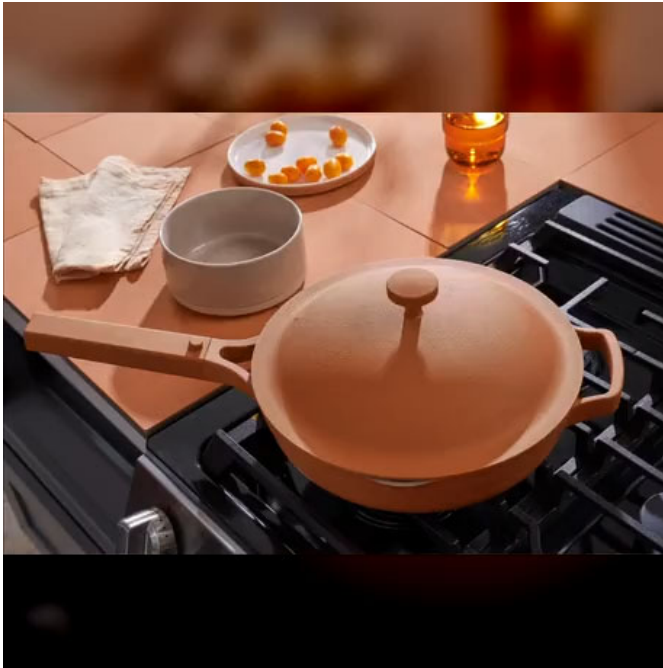
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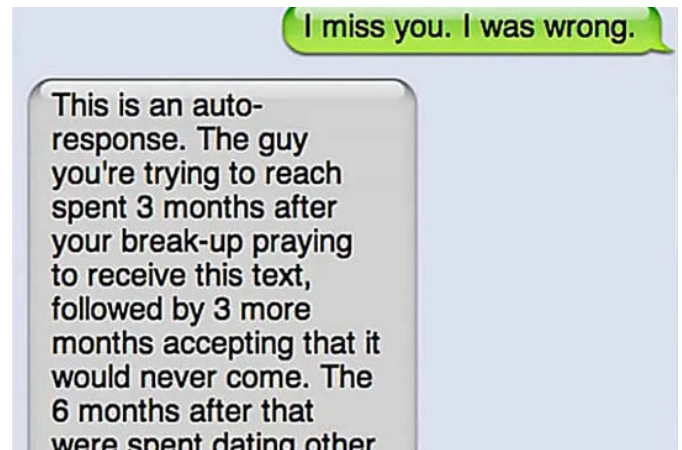
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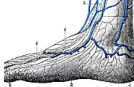
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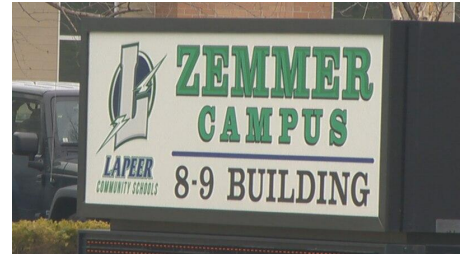
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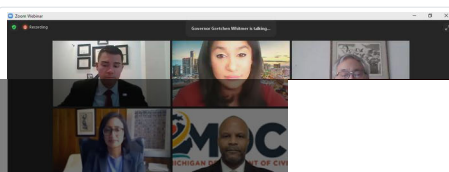
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